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THE VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY AND THE  
DOCTRINE OF MAYA.

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THE doctrine of Maya is considered by many thinkers, both in the East and the West, to be an integral part of the Vedanta philosophy. The Vedanta system is supposed to be an acosmic pantheism, holding that the Absolute called Brahman alone is real and the finite manifestations are illusory. There is one absolute undifferentiated reality, the nature of which is constituted by knowledge. The entire empirical world, with its distinction of finite minds and the objects of their thought, is an illusion. Subjects and objects are like the fleeting images which encompass the dreaming soul and melt away into nothingness at the moment of waking. The term Maya signifies the illusory character of the finite world. Sankara explains the Maya conception by the analogies of the rope and the snake, the juggler and jugglery, the desert and the mirage, and the dreamer and the dream. The central features of the Vedanta philosophy, as it is conceived at the present day, are briefly explained in the lines:

Brahman is the real, the universe is false,  
The Atman is Brahman. Nothing else.

Although the doctrine of Maya is viewed at the present day as an essential part of the Vedanta system, Oriental scholars are divided in their opinions concerning the relation of the Maya doctrine to the Vedanta system of philosophy. Mr. Gough, Dr. Deussen of Kiel, and Dr. Prabhu Dutt Shastri have all asserted that the doctrine of Maya is native to the Vedanta philosophy. They are of the opinion that the conception of Maya belongs to the primitive speculation of the early sages of India. "The doctrine of Maya, or the unreality of the

duality of subject and object and the unreality of the plurality of souls and their environment, is the very life of the primitive Indian philosophy" (Gough, "Philosophy of the Upanishads," p. 237). But, on the other side, Colebrooke and Dr. Thibaut hold that it is a graft of a later growth. Colebrooke, in a paper on the Vedanta, read before the Royal Asiatic Society in 1827, said: "The notion that the versatile world is an illusion (Maya) and that all that passes to the apprehension of the waking individual is but a phantasy presented to his imagination, and every seeming thing is unreal and all is visionary, does not appear to be the doctrine of the text of the Vedanta. I have remarked nothing which countenances it in the Sutras of Vyasa or in the gloss of Sankara, but much concerning it in the minor commentaries and elementary treatises. I take it to be no tenet of the original Vedanta philosophy, but of another branch from which later writers have borrowed it and have intermixed and confounded the two systems." Colebrooke is wrong in holding that he finds nothing in the gloss of Sankara which countenances the Maya doctrine. But he is right, according to the present writer, in thinking that the text of the Vedanta, *viz.*, the Vedas, the earlier Upanishads, and the Vedanta Sutras, does not suggest, even remotely, the theory of Maya. On the other hand, it will be possible for us to establish that these texts point to a realistic conception of the universe. It was Sankara, under the influence of the Buddhistic teaching, following the traditions of Gaudapada, who imported the conception of Maya into the Vedanta system. Maya is a pivotal principle of the later Sankara Vedanta, but it is not a part of the primitive cosmological conception of the Vedas and the earlier Upanishads. This controversy over the relation of the Maya theory to the Vedanta philosophy is not peculiar to our age. Even Indian thinkers of the past have doubted the authenticity of the Maya theory. Vignana Bikshu cites with approval a passage from the Padma

Purana, where the tenet of Maya is said to be crypto-Buddhistic. In the Padma Purana, Isvara says to Parvati, his wife: "I, myself, goddess, assuming the form of a Brahman, uttered in the Kali age the false doctrine of Maya, which is covert Buddhism, which imputes a perverted and generally censured signification to the words of the Veda and inculcates the abandonment of ceremonial works and an inactivity consequent on such cessation" (Muir, "Sanskrit Texts," Vol. III, p. 202). Thus the doctrine of Maya is considered by some to be an *essential* feature of the Vedanta system, while others view it as an *accidental* accretion to the system. What is the place of Maya in the Vedanta philosophy? It is the aim of this paper to contribute to the solution of this problem.

The Upanishads, which are the concluding portions of the Vedas, the Brahma Sutras, and the Bhagavadgita form the texts of the Vedanta philosophy. The latter two are only summaries of the Upanishads, and the Upanishads grew out of the speculation of the Vedas. It is, therefore, our business to describe briefly the systems of thought contained in the Vedas and the Upanishads, and to see if they lend any countenance to the Maya theory.

It is an oft-quoted saying that philosophy begins in wonder. The mystery of the world with all its changes strikes the reflective temper. How does the white milk come from the red cow? How is it that the sun does not fall down? "Unpropped beneath, not fastened firm, how comes it that downward turned, he falls not downward?" (Rigveda, IV, 13, 5.) Philosophy, according to Hegel, is a thinking consideration of things. In thinking, we reach the law of the object, its essence, its universal element, in a word, its explanation. The Vedic philosophy grew out of a demand for the explanation of actual experience. Philosophy bade men seek beneath all change, which is the law of life, unity and persistency. All things are passing; what remains? Any-

thing or nothing? The Vedic age raised the problem of philosophy and offered a solution. It was then that attempts to reflect upon the world of experience were made for the first time. But we should bear in mind that the Vedas are a production of a race as yet in its infancy, struggling to give expression to its religious emotions. Viewed with our eyes, they appear unphilosophical. By a rigorous application of the principle of causality, the Vedic philosophers were forced to postulate deities behind the natural forces. Why should the sun rise every morning and the moon every evening, if it is not due to powers working behind them? Such was the origin of the gods Surya and Soma. The ancient Hindu saw a god in the clouds and heard a god in the winds. The world of nature became a divine community. The elemental forces of earth and sky, fire and wind, became small divinities. Polytheism is the doctrine of the Vedas, though there were glimpses of the divine unity underlying all things. These glimpses were few and far between and were not sufficient to raise the people beyond the seeming multiplicity of the divine. The Upanishads, as we shall see, emphasized the unity of all things which was dimly suggested by the Vedas.

During the Vedic period, the universe in all its fullness was conceived as real. Only, the Vedic thinkers asked for an explanation of it: philosophy meant to them a disentangling of the ultimate elements from the chaos in which they are lost. The demand of philosophy, *viz.*, scientific knowledge of reality, led them to postulate a number of agents behind the diversity of things. But there is no suggestion here of the unreality of the universe. In a sense, reality, for these sages, was not something extra-empirical, but the world of experience.

Passing next to the Upanishads, we find that the thinkers of that era were not satisfied with many gods and many lords. They attacked the problem of philosophy boldly. Philosophy always seeks a unifying principle

by which the immense wealth of phenomena may be articulated into a coherent system or a cosmos: it views the whole universe with its infinite variety as one single system. The sages sought for an ultimate unity that can explain everything, that comprises both the ego and the non-ego. The polytheism of the Vedic age was discarded and the dim hints of monism thrown out by the Vedic hymns elaborated and developed. Thus the Upanishads naturally grew out of the Vedic hymns. That the different agents are one is suggested in several passages of the Rigveda. "They called him Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni; then there is that celestial well-winged bird. Sages name variously that which is but one. They call it Agni, Yama, Mataraisvani" (Rigveda, I, 164, 46).

The philosophic impulse led to the abolition of polytheism and the synthesis of the many agencies. What is the nature of the supreme agency? Is it matter or spirit? The Upanishads declare that it is spirit. The Aitareya Upanishad, after enumerating the principal classes of objects, says: "All this is produced by Reason and rests in Reason, and Reason is Brahman" (Aitareya Upanishad, III, 3). "As a mass of salt has neither inside nor outside, but is altogether a mass of taste, thus indeed the Self has neither inside nor outside, but is altogether a mass of knowledge" (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, IV, 5, 13). Another passage says: "It is the true, the Infinite, and knowledge" (Taittiriya Upanishad). In the Brahma Sutras, the theory of the Sankhya philosophers that the Absolute or reality is matter or Prakriti is criticised. Because Pradhana or Prakriti does not possess the power of automatic guidance and control, it cannot be the Absolute. Thus the Brahma Sutras say: "The Pradhana cannot be the cause of the world, since the order and arrangement of the world is impossible on that hypothesis." Hence, the Absolute is not matter; for order, harmony, and rationality cannot be due to the accident of material motions. The

blind workings of chance cannot give rise to the sublime order which we find everywhere in the universe. A supreme intelligence was made the absolute principle. In place of a plurality of spirits, the Upanishads substituted one supreme spirit. But no attempt was made to explain away as an illusion the world of experience which had aroused curiosity in the inquiring mind. Its explanation, however, was sought and the solution found in a supreme spirit. The supreme spirit was considered to be the explanation of all thinking beings and the object of all thought. In the II Aitareya Aranyaka, 6 Adhyaya, 1 Khanda, it is said: (2) "Who is he whom we meditate on as the self? Which is the self? (3) That by which we see (form), that by which we hear sound, that by which we perceive smells, that by which we utter speech, that by which we distinguish sweet and not sweet, and what comes from the heart and the mind, by perception, command, understanding, knowledge, wisdom, seeing, holding, thinking, considering, readiness, remembering, conceiving, willing, breathing, loving, desiring? (4) No, all these are various names only of knowledge (the true self), (5) and that self (consisting of knowledge) is Brahman, it is Indra, it is Prajapati. All the Devas, those five great elements, earth, air, ether, water, fire, these and those which are, as it were, small and mixed and seeds of this kind and that kind, born from eggs, born from the womb, born from heat, born from germs, horses, cows, men, elephants and whatsoever breathes, whether walking or flying and what is immovable, all that is led (produced) by knowledge (the self). (6) It rests on knowledge (the self). The world is led (produced) by knowledge (the self). Knowledge is its cause. (7) Knowledge is Brahman." (Max Müller, Upanishads, Vol. I, p. 245.) Thus, everything in the universe, instead of being dismissed as illusory, is thought to be produced by Brahman. But this principle of Brahman is recognized as immanent in the universe. It is not a corporeal presence seated on high in the

heavens, but an eternal spirit manifesting itself in all things. It is not apart from the world,—it is the world. The world is the product of Brahman, and, therefore, Brahman. Hence, instead of being an illusion, the world is the sole reality. There is nothing else besides it. “Believe it, my son. That which is the subtle essence, in it all that exists has its Self. It is the True; it is the Self and thou O! Svetaketu, art it” (Chandogya, VI Prapathaka, 12 Khanda). “That whence these beings are born, by which when born they live, into which they enter when they die, endeavor to know that; that is Brahman” (Taittiriya Upanishad, III, 1). Here the highest point of the Upanishad teaching is reached, the identity of the finite self and everything else with the Absolute. The Absolute is the beginning of all things and the end of all things.

We see that the Vedanta philosophers attacked the problem of reality: What is the explanation of this universe? They started out from the answer given by the Vedic sages that a plurality of gods is necessary to account for the universe, and improved upon it by reducing the plurality to a unity; this unity is regarded as a spiritual principle and is called Brahman. The whole world is regarded as nothing more nor less than a manifestation of Brahman, and is, therefore, just as real as Brahman is. Since Brahman is the fulness of being, the world which is but a manifestation thereof must be real. The significance of the different theories of creation discussed in the Upanishads is this, that Brahman and the world are very closely related. The two are one, though sometimes we regard one as the effect, the other as the cause. The accounts of creation in the Upanishads are not to be taken seriously; but they clearly show that the Upanishad writers did not conceive the world as pure illusion. They regarded the world as real and seriously set about accounting for its reality. If the world is unreal, questions concerning creation,—whether it is a product distinct from Brahman



or only a material modification of it,—can find no place.<sup>1</sup> These accounts of creation, according to the defenders of the Maya doctrine, are only concessions to popular clamor: the ignorant masses cannot be made to accept this lofty philosophy which preaches the reality of Brahman and the illusory nature of the world. The multitude cannot deny the reality of the world. As Dr. Shastri remarks: “This extreme idealism, which refused to grant reality to the world, seemed to be rather too advanced for the ordinary understanding, which could not reconcile the fact that the world was there somehow or other, and it could therefore not be explained away by being called unreal. The inherent empirical tendencies of our nature are too strong to be wholly conquered; howsoever they may be subdued, they still rise up at some time and refuse to harmonize with the metaphysical standpoint. Moreover, to the majority who are not accustomed to transcend the boundaries of empirical understanding, such metaphysical speculations as are contained in the pure idealism of Yagnavalkya seem hardly to convey any meaning. Yet these minds are not totally to be ignored by the old sages, they must then make room for some concession to the empirical consciousness which refuses to part with the idea of the reality of the world. It was possible to do this by granting the existence of the world and yet maintaining at the same time that the sole reality is Atman” (“The Doctrine of Maya,” pp. 67, 68). This explanation is, indeed, ingenious and has long been the current one. But it is rather hard to comprehend. If the realistic conception of the universe is merely a concession to the views of the ignorant multitude, it is not easy to see why it is emphasized again and again, in almost every Upanishad. The Upanishad writers, who were wholly untrammelled by authority, cannot be supposed to have

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<sup>1</sup> For accounts of creation see Chandogya VI, 2, 3; Aitareya, I; Mundaka Upanishad, first part of the second Mundaka.

laid stress on a strictly untenable position, if it appeared untenable to them. The untenableness of the doctrine of the reality of the world, and its supposed origin as a device to satisfy the gross and empirical nature of the multitude, are inventions of the later Vedantins who refuse to grant the reality of the world, but who still seek to harmonize their teachings with the Upanishads. If we distinguish the facts from their hypothetical and interpretative gloss, we will see that the accounts of creation are genuine parts of the earlier Vedanta philosophy, and that this philosophy recognized the reality of the world, though it conceived it as an expression of the nature of Brahman.

Thus we see how ancient Hindu philosophy sought for an explanation of the world of experience and arrived at the solution that the whole world is identical with the Eternal Spirit. There is no duality between the two, between the world and the spirit. The world *is* the spirit. But any one portion of the world, any aspect thereof, is only a phase of the eternal spirit and is, therefore, not the spirit. Every part is dependent on the others, which altogether constitute Brahman. Reality is the whole, and it is one system. It is impossible to be satisfied with anything short of the whole. "Sir, in what does the infinite rest? In its own greatness or not even in greatness?" (2) "In the world they call cows and horses, elephants and gold, slaves, wives, fields, houses, greatness. I do not mean this," thus he spoke, "for in that case, one being (possessor) rests in something else (but the infinite cannot rest in something different from itself)." (Chandogya Upanishad, VII Prapathaka, 24 Khanda.) Any part or feature of reality may be regarded as dependent on some other part or parts. In the case of everything but the absolute system as a whole, this dependence is found. Only the Absolute is real. We are unable to rest in any of the objects as an absolute reality, *i. e.*, a reality that does not need to be referred to anything else as its explanation. Reality

is that which stands in need of nothing else. So a plurality of realities is a contradiction in terms. Reality, in other words, is an organism, furnished with a multiplicity of organs and manifestations of life. The true is the whole, and the untrue is the fragmentary or the limited. The finite is real in so far as it is an organic unity, organic with the whole life of the Absolute. We all exist in and not apart from God. The Absolute is a single, all-inclusive system. The finite, we say, is an expression of the spiritual principle, although the Vedanta does not regard it as an exhaustive expression of the spirit. The finite is an aspect (though a partial aspect) of reality. The finite is the incomplete, while the infinite is the complete and the sufficient. To be finite is to be limited. There is something else to limit it. It is not self-sufficient. As Hegel would put it, the finite always transcends itself. The Absolute is neither this nor that, but the whole in its completeness; the finite is real as a part of the Absolute. The completely independent reality is the whole which we call the Absolute. The finite which sets itself up as a *res completa*, is real only in its relation to the whole. The reality of the finite is not denied. It has a life of its own as a part of the whole. Again, if we look at the parts, we will find change, but if we look at reality as a whole, we find that though there is change, yet there is persistence. Identity is maintained even in change. The whole will remain identical with what it is even if there be change in the parts. If persistence or permanence is supposed to be the test of reality, we find it is only the whole that is real, for only that is unchanging while the finite changes. "Brahman is the unchanging among changing things" (Katha Upanishad, II, 22). The whole remains even though there is change. The whole of nature with all that belongs to it is in a process of change. The parts of nature with their changes are in time, but the whole is out of time. Thus, the permanent or the unchanging or the real or the self-sufficient is the whole or the totality

of existence, and it is otherwise called Brahman, for Brahman is all modifications. It is everything that exists. Brahma Sutras (II, 1, 22) distinctly declares that Brahman is *adhika*; *i. e.*, more than the individual souls. The finite modifications, as the poet says,

. . . are but broken lights of Thee,  
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

This idea is brought out by the Mundaka Upanishad, which declares that Brahman is that “through which, if it is known, everything else becomes known” (I Mundaka, 1 Khanda, verse 3). Again, the Chandogya Upanishad says, “When Brahman is known, everything is known” (VI, 1).

We see, there is a great difference between this view, which ascribes reality,—though a dependent reality,—to the finite world, and the Maya view, which reduces it to an illusion. The world which our intellect reveals to us is real, though its reality is limited and partial. The finite world is not absolutely real, for it demands something else on which it depends. It is Brahman that imparts its being to the world. But from this it does not follow that our life is a mere dream and our knowledge of the world a mere phantasy. However imperfect and inadequate it may be, it is a real knowledge of a real world. The world, to the Maya theorists, is a false appearance, as unreal as the snake for which a piece of rope is mistaken; according to the strict Vedantic view, it is an inadequate expression of the spiritual principle, and yet as real as Brahman. The Vedanta texts ask us to rid ourselves of the belief in the separate and individual existence of the finite modes. They tell us that their reality is Brahman or the whole. We have to see Brahman in everything and everything in Brahman. “The self in all beings and all beings in the self, thus sees the self-poised with equal vision in all” (Bhagavad-gita, VI, 29). “He who sees all beings in the supreme self and the supreme self in all beings, becomes fearless

and is not anxious about saving his self" (Isavasya Upanishad, mantra 6).

Can this reality be known? According to the view of the Absolute we have just sketched, the absolute reality cannot be known in its entirety. Our intellect is so constituted that it can grasp reality only piece by piece. We can see things only in a fragmentary way. Brahman is infinitely more than what our finite lives can express. Reality is the whole; the finite consciousness is limited, and cannot therefore grasp the whole. Reality can be known by us only dimly as through a glass, but we can never see it face to face. The object of our knowledge is limited, finite, and only partial. It is not as real as the whole. This does not mean that our knowledge is false. We do not know Brahman fully, but we know it partially. Kena Upanishad says: "I do not think, I know Him fully, nor do I say I know Him not at all, for I know. He amongst us who says, 'I know Him,' he knows Him not. He who says, 'I do not know Him,' he knows indeed" (II Khanda, mantra 2). This passage clearly shows that Brahman is unknowable in its entirety, while knowable in part. Reality is neither completely unknown nor completely known. Reality in its wholeness cannot be grasped by the discursive understanding, which distinguishes, separates, and relates. The final unity at which thought aims is beyond all concepts. The feature of selective activity characteristic of the human mind makes it unequal to the task of grasping reality. Thought on account of its very nature is destined to fail in its enterprise. Reality is the whole, and its essence is spiritual, but we cannot grasp it. It is in us, though we do not know it. The following passages bring out the fact that the Upanishad writers considered our understanding inadequate to the task of knowing reality: "The eye does not go thither, nor speech, nor mind. We do not know, we do not understand, how can any one teach it?" (Kena Upanishad, Khanda I, verse 3.) "The Self is to be described by

no, no; He is incomprehensible, for He cannot be comprehended" (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad III, 9, 26). "This idea of the Self that thou hast gained is not to be attained by the discursive intellect" (Katha Upanishad, valli 2). Although the Vedantins were satisfied that the intellect, which works through the categories of subject and object, which breaks up unity and marks off one thing from another, cannot grasp the Absolute, they thought there was a higher kind of knowledge, knowledge of intuition, knowledge of immediate apprehension of reality, which made reality known. The Vedanta philosophy does not stop with a confession of the impotence of the human reason. Immediate apprehension is capable of putting us in possession of reality. In a final intuition we can realize the immediate fact that all is one. Know it we cannot; but realize it we must. Logic does not help us here, but it is life. Though we cannot know it, we can see it. This is an element of mysticism in the Vedanta system. We are told that we know the Absolute immediately, by feeling or by *Anschauung*, but this is not philosophy or a rational exposition of the nature of reality. We want the soul of the seer or the eye of the artist to take in at one glance the whole of reality, which cannot be comprehended by our intelligence. Bhava, questioned by Vashkalin concerning Brahman, explained it to him by silence. He said to him, "Learn Brahman, O Friend," and became silent. Then on a second or a third question he replied: "I am teaching you indeed, but you do not understand. Silent is that Self." This silence is an indication of spiritual rapture where human speech and understanding fail.

Resuming the thread of our argument, we see that the earlier Vedantin does not deny reality to the finite, but grants Brahman or the Absolute a reality that embraces the reality of the finite world. The analogies which the Upanishads use to illustrate the relation between the Absolute and the finite world clearly indicate the reality

of the finite world. In the Chandogya Upanishad it is said: "My dear, as by one clod of clay, all that is made of clay is known, the difference being only a name arising from speech, but the truth being that all is clay . . ." (VI Prapathaka, Khanda 1). Plainly the finite world is not a *vivasta* or an illusion, but a *parinama* or a real modification of Brahman. The finite world has Brahman for its causal substance, as clay is the causal matter of earthen pots. The illustrative instance of a lump of clay does not say that either the effect is unreal or the process by which the cause is transformed into the effect is unreal. The world is nothing but Brahman, and, therefore, the world is not a baseless illusion or an imaginary dream. But the reality of the world is its dependence on the Absolute. The Vedanta philosophy does not dispute the reality of the world, but simply declares that the world is not unconditioned. In the same Upanishad it is said: "Brahman is the subtle essence . . . by which the whole Nyagrodha tree exists" (VI Prapathaka, Khanda 12). The whole of reality is an organism, and it is a spiritual organism, and the essence of the organism is constituted by Brahman or the eternal spirit. The different parts of the organism are but differentiations of the Absolute. The whole is Brahman. Again, in the Vedanta Sūtras, the relation of Brahman to the individual souls is represented as that of the snake to its coils. Apart from the snake there are no coils, just as apart from Brahman there is no world. The snake is the coils and the hood and the erect posture and so on. So Brahman is the whole. The coils by themselves have no independent reality. Just so the finite world has no independent reality. But the coils are as real as the snake. So the world is as real as the Absolute. (See Vedanta Sūtras, III, 2-28, Vol. III, p. 174.)

It is supposed that passages which speak of the sole reality of Brahman involve the implication that the finite world is unreal. Dr. Deussen thinks the theory of Maya forms the 'necessary complement' 'to the doc-

trine of the Atman' ("Philosophy of the Upanishads," p. 44). Dr. Shastri remarks: "The theory may be enunciated in two ways: (1) that the world is an illusion or appearance, and (2) that the only reality is the Atman. These two statements mean the same thing, so that the passages which emphasize the statement that the Atman is the only reality, clearly mean that all else (*i. e.*, other than the Atman, *viz.*, the world, etc.) is not real" ("The Doctrine of Maya," p. 49). We protest against this logic. The inference of the unreality of the world from the sole reality of Brahman is legitimate, if the world is viewed as separate from Brahman. But is there any ground for such an assumption? The defenders of the Maya theory assume that the world is something different from Brahman; they combine with this assumption the premise that Brahman alone is real and logically conclude that the seemingly solid world is illusory. We grant the premise that Brahman alone is real; but we dispute the truth of the other premise that the world is something different from Brahman. The reality of Brahman according to the Vedanta is not exclusive of the reality of the universe. The two are not different. The visible universe has its basis in Brahman. As things made of clay are as real as the lump of clay, the universe is as real as Brahman underlying it. The reality of Brahman everywhere asserted in the Upanishads, instead of implying the unreality of the world, logically involves its reality. Anything apart from the Self is unreal, but the world is the Self. There are passages which say, "It is the air, it is the fire." The Svetasvatara Upanishad says (IV, 3): "Thou art woman; thou art man; thou art youth; thou art maiden; thou as an old man totterest along on thy staff; thou art born with thy face turned everywhere." The different theories of creation, however much they differ in regard to details, still agree on this one point that the world has for its creator Brahman. The Chandogya Upanishad says: "Being only, my dear, was this in the



beginning, only one without a second. It thought, may I be many, may I grow forth? It sent forth fire" (VI, 2, 1, 3). Again: "In the beginning all this was Self, one only; there was nothing else blinking whatsoever. He thought, shall I send forth worlds?" (Aitareya Aranyaka, II, 4, 1, 12). "That whence these beings are born, by which when born they live, into which they enter when they die, endeavor to know that, that is Brahman" (Taittiriya Upanishad).

The Vedanta Sutras, which in concise aphorisms sum up the essential features of the Vedanta system of philosophy, lay down in the second Sutra the definition of Brahman as "that whence the origin and so on (*i. e.*, sustentation and reabsorption) of this world proceed." The Vedanta Sutras declare that the Brahman is a unity in variety and not a pure blank identity, for they say: "And likewise in the Self there are diversified objects" (Sutras, Pada 1, Adhyaya II, Sutra 28). In the face of these statements, which clearly establish the oneness of the finite and the infinite, it cannot be maintained that the reality of Brahman means the falsity of the finite. The argument will be valid on a dualistic metaphysics which makes the infinite and the finite different, but not on a monistic system like the Vedanta, in which the finite world and Brahman are said to be one.

When confronted with this difficulty, the Sankara Vedantins are ready with the answer that all this belongs to lower knowledge, which has for its aim the satisfaction of the ordinary empirical intellect. The Brahman that is described as the cause of the universe is not the unqualified, distinctionless Brahman of higher knowledge, but the Brahman associated with Maya termed Iswara, belonging to lower knowledge. But to this distinction between higher knowledge, treating of Nirguna Brahman, and lower knowledge, treating of Saguna Brahman, we have to object on the following grounds: The Brahma Sutras are an epitome of the philosophic teaching of the Upanishads. We, therefore, naturally

expect a definition of the higher Brahman there. They attempt in their very first Sutra to give us an exposition of Brahman, and that of necessity must be the exposition of the higher Brahman belonging to the superior science. The definition given in the second Sutra is that Brahman is the cause of the origin, preservation, and reabsorption of the world. It would be hard to suppose an inquiry into Brahman starting with a false possibility were it not for Sankara's commentary on the second Sutra, in which he observes that Isvara is the Brahman referred to as the originator (and so on) of the world. It is Brahman in union with Maya from whom the false appearance of the world is projected. Sankara, in the interests of his system, has to assume that it is not Brahman, but a false Brahman, that is the cause of the world. He dismisses the world as illusory, but there are texts holding to its reality and even pointing out that Brahman is the cause of its reality. The way out of the difficulty is that all this is lower knowledge, intended to satisfy the ordinary intellect. The world is real. It is projected out of Brahman associated with Maya. The unreal nature of Isvara and his product, the world, will become apparent if one acquires higher knowledge. But in the view of the present writer, this entire difficulty is due to a twisting of the Vedanta doctrine. It is not our purpose just now to criticise the doctrine of Maya. All we are interested in making clear is that it has no support in the earlier form of the Vedanta philosophy. If the Maya doctrine had really been held by the earlier Vedantins, they would have said something about Maya when the theories of creation were described. When speaking of the material cause of the world even, Brahman is asserted to be the material cause. There is not a single word about Maya. The Vedanta Sutra says: "Brahman is the material cause on account of this not being in conflict with the promissory statements and illustrating instances" (I Adhyaya, 4 Pada, Sutra 23). If Sankara's theory

is held by the earlier Vedantins, then Maya must be supposed to be *upadana* of the material world; but they say that the material cause or *upadana* is Brahman, and object to a suggestion of the Sankhyas which makes the material cause identical with Maya, with which is generally identified the Prakriti of the Sankhyas. Here, if anywhere, we should expect a reference to Maya if the Sutrakara entertained that belief, but there is no reference to it. Secondly, the distinction between higher Brahman and lower Brahman is foreign to the Upanishads. In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, Brahman is represented as destitute of qualities in one place (VIII Prakaranam), and in another place Brahman is referred to as the Ruler of the world. "By the command of the Imperishable, the sun and moon stand apart." Even Sandilya Vidya (Chandogya, III, 14) is not aware of the distinction between the lower and the higher Brahman. Sankara holds that this distinction is necessary to synthesize the different accounts of Brahman. It may be regarded as a practical working assumption. In some passages Brahman is described as incomprehensible, in some others Brahman is described as the cause of this, that, etc. How are the two views to be reconciled? To explain the discrepancy it is not necessary for us to assume that the former passages describe the higher Brahman and the latter the lower Brahman, and that the lower Brahman is an appearance of the higher Brahman since Maya is associated with it. For it is quite possible that the Upanishads, when their interest is to lay stress on the finite nature of the human intellect and its incapacity to grasp the nature of reality, speak of Brahman as something that cannot be characterized adequately by the finite mind; and that they describe it as the Self, the life of all, that in which we live, move, and have our being when they are interested in showing that the whole universe is based on and is Brahman. There is no suggestion that the two are different. No doubt the Mundaka Upanishad distinguishes between superior

and inferior knowledge (see I Mundaka, 1 Khanda, verses 4 to 5). But superior knowledge is not here knowledge of distinctionless Brahman; nor is inferior knowledge that of determinate Brahman. Superior knowledge treats of Brahman, while inferior knowledge treats of sacrifices, modes of performance, etc. The Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita are, according to the Mundaka Upanishad, superior knowledge. They are born of the spirit of revolt against the ceremonial portion of the Vedas. The Vedas lend color to the doctrine that religiosity consists in the observance of the ceremonial. The Upanishads or the higher knowledge point out that the more important thing is the inner mind and right knowledge. So the Vedas, with all their appendages, are held to be inferior to the Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita, which speak of the nature of the individual soul and its relation to the Eternal Reality.

Let us conclude this discussion concerning the place of Maya in the Vedanta philosophy with a consideration of the positive or the negative nature of the Absolute. Is Brahman the fullness of being or is it an empty abstraction? The Vedantins, including Sankara and his followers, admit that the Brahman is all-real and all-perfect. But this all-reality of Brahman can be granted only if the world is real. If the world is Maya, then Brahman becomes a pure blank, a negative infinite. It is, as Hegel would put it, a spurious infinite. It is a mere beyond, which we do not know. It can never be the explanation of all that is, for there is nothing. The world is not. But according to the Vedantin, the Absolute is pure affirmative Being, the presupposition from which all determinations of the finite proceed. Knowing it, we know everything. An acosmic interpretation (like the theory of Maya) that denies the reality of the finite world, will make the Vedantic Absolute a pure nothing. Such an interpretation would deserve Erdmann's criticism, which likens this Absolute to the lion's den in the fable, in which all the footsteps of thought are pointed

inward and none directed outward. But according to the earlier Vedanta, the Absolute is not merely the negation of the finite, but is its explanation. The Absolute includes the finite. It is the whole. It is the self-determining principle which manifests itself in all the determinations of the finite without losing its unity with itself. The Absolute involves the diversified universe as the universal involves the particular. The relation between the Absolute and the finite is that between the universal and the particular. (This is only an analogy, and like all analogies should not be pressed too far.) The particular is an illustration of the universal, and the universal is the ground of the particular. It is that in the light of which the particular becomes intelligible. We do not deny the reality of the particular, but we say its reality is due to the reality of the general principle. The place, the function, and the exact nature of the reality of the particular are brought out by relating it to the universal. In exactly the same way, it is wrong to think that the finite world is a reality by itself. Its reality is due to the spiritual principle underlying it. If you conceive it apart from the Absolute, then you are viewing it from a mistaken point of view. We have to see, as Malebranche saw, all things in God, if we want to see aught. Just as the general exists in the particular, so the Absolute exists in the finite. There is no finite without an infinite, and no infinite without finite. These are the necessary sides or moments of one and the same concrete reality. Reality appears in the finite, and the finite is its revelation. The Bhagavadgita says: "He who sees me everywhere and everything in me, to him I vanish not, nor to me does he vanish" (Chap. VI, 29). The one is in all, and all are the one. The Absolute is inclusive and not exclusive. It is absurd to say that the finite experience is illusory. If you think the world is illusory, then the Absolute becomes pure vacancy and in fact neither more nor less than nothing. It is a matter of indifference whether you call it being

or nothing, a conclusion with which no Vedantin will agree; and to be consistent no Vedantin should agree with the theory that the world is illusory. The conclusion at which we arrive is that the doctrine of Maya is not an integral part of the Vedanta system of philosophy. The Absolute is not a pure self-identity or a simple reality opposed to the world as appearance; it is an eternal unity involving differentiations, and therefore the Vedanta system is not acosmism.

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## DISCUSSION.

## THE DIVORCE LAWS OF ENGLAND AND WALES.

I can quite understand that Mr. Haynes does not agree with my views on this subject, but I cannot admit that I have misrepresented the evidence. For instance, I do *not* say in my paper that the recommendation of the Majority Report is "against the evidence"; it is against some of the evidence and has some in support of it. What I say is, that there is strong evidence against it, and I begin by quoting the *majority* report to the effect that of the *specialists* in mental disease only four were in favor of the recommendation and seven were against. I then go on to quote the minority remark about "experts" to which Mr. Haynes objects. Of course much depends upon the meaning attached to the word "expert"; I should not myself have expected to find that all the medical officers in asylums were experts; but as my argument was based upon the evidence of "specialists" it is not affected.

I did not know before that there was anything peculiar with my views about vows. My position is simply that it is a mistake to take, or to encourage young people to take a vow of permanent loyalty, when all that is intended is a temporary and conditional loyalty. Why this should debar me from being interested in securing equality as between men and women, and between rich and poor, I fail to see.

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